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WUUUUUUUURGH!

2000 AD

THE M.A.C.H. PROJECT

ZERO IS BACK!

The MOON MAN

BLACKSHADOW

LAIR

Tales That ASTONISHED

#4 FREE!

DEATHLOK

A LOOK BACK AT COMICS FROM
MARCH 1966!
JET WEEKLY 1971!
SPACE PATROL!
THE SUPER-HEROES
18 *DC v Marvel UK!*

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PLANETFALL

ALL-ORIGINAL STORIES FROM STARSCAPE VOL.1

DAMAGE CIRCUS - THE HITCHER
GUARD DOGS - MONOSENSE
GIRL - THE DETERRENT

Tales That Astonished is in an A5 format and can be printed without distortion on home printers and read easily on PCs, laptops,

STARSCAPE SAYS...

Calling all Starkids!

Thanks and welcome to TALES THAT ASTONISHED.

There's a little bit of a cyborg theme going on in this issue, with the popular 2000AD M.A.C.H. Project. It does not get the love it deserves but Zero was immense. Then we have the tragic Deathlok.

In other articles, Steve introduces us to some rather obscure heroes and heroines, many of which can be read at Comic Book +. Catgirl reminds me of Zorro's Black Whip, but she massively predates Bat-Girl.

In the future, we have several features lined up, including characters, such as Captain Britain, Australian comics, DC Thomson and Fleetway action heroes, plus several from the depths of the golden age and classics from the Silver and Bronze Age. We would be delighted to hear memories from you.

Reach me at tta@starscapecomicuk Until then...

Keep watching the stars!

Chris Smillie
(Starchief)

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TALES THAT ASTONISHED

Vol. 1 *No. 4*

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Contents

Starscape Says... 3

Showcased 5
M.A.C.H. 1: the British Bionic Man 5

Strange Adventures 8
The Moon Man 8

The Unknown Soldiers 13
Blackshadow 13

Brit Random 17
Jet 29th May 1971 17

Invisible Women 22
Catgirl 22

Sinister Tales 24
M.A.C.H. Zero 24

Where Monsters Dwell 30
Deathlok: versus War-Wolf 30

Flicks That Time Forgot 35
Space Patrol 35

The Grave and the Old 44
The Super-Heroes 18 44

This Day in Comics 48
March 1966 48

written by JASON QUINN and drawn by DAVID PIKE and PEDRO CRUZ

Cockchester is a Northern English city with its fair share of super-villains. And who stands with the forces of law and order? Why Britain's champions - the Guard Dogs!

SHOWCASED

(supermen remembered)

M.A.C.H. 1: the British Bionic Man

The first issue of **2000AD** had, on a quite awful cover, the big star of the comic featuring prominently. Well, as prominent as it could be, given there was a big piece of plastic tat occupying the vast majority. That was not Judge Dredd – he was not even in that premier issue. Instead, it was the *Man Activated by Compu-Hyperpuncture* – M.A.C.H. 1!

Not that we knew how to pronounce that…especially being from Scotland, where words like loch have an altogether different ring to the hard K it turned out to be.

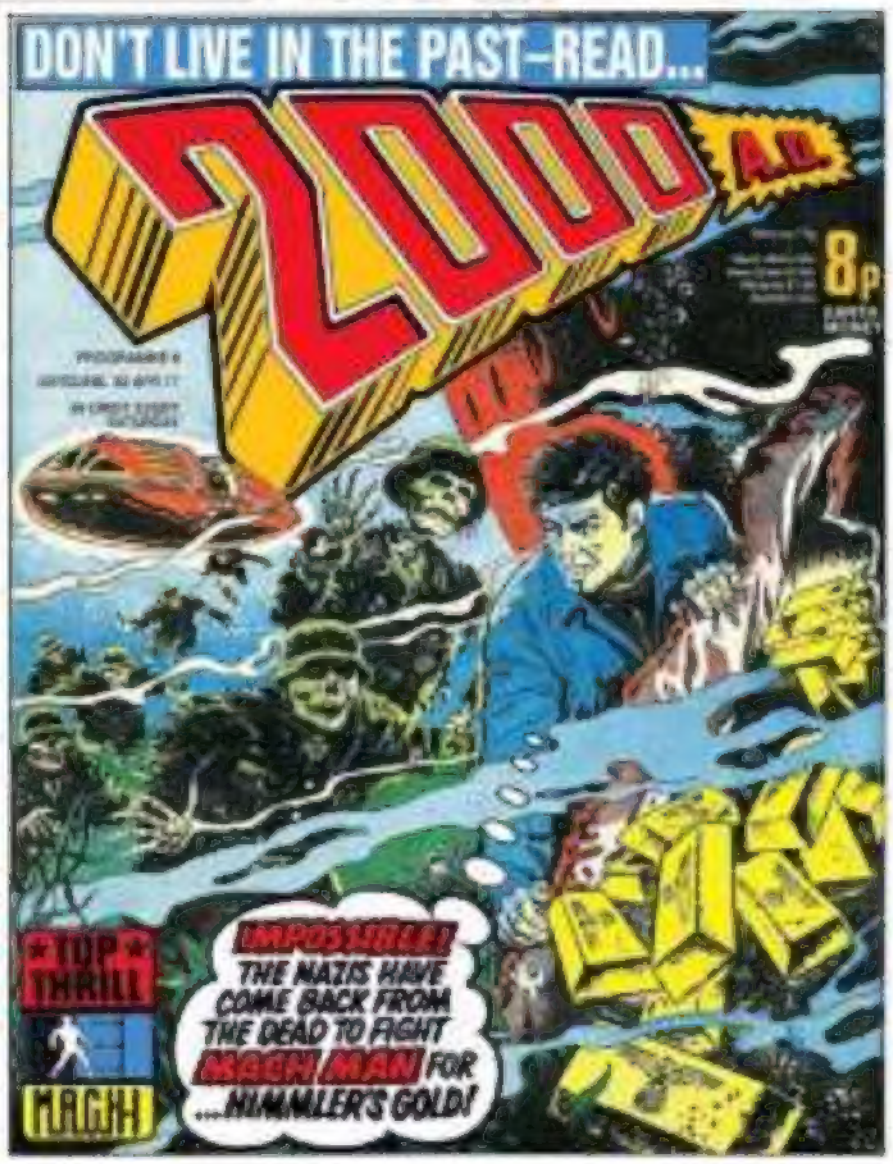
Action Man

2000AD took its cue from **Action** weekly (a very different comic to the Superman Action Comics). Action adapted x-rated films into comic strips for children (yeah, really). So, we had *Hook-Jaw*, instead of Jaws. Dredger for Dirty Harry. Death Game 2000 (aka *Spinball*) for Rollerball. Not surprisingly, the comic was eventually banned, returning in a toned-down format. During the late-70s in the UK, the biggest series on TV was Steve Austin, the **Six Million Dollar Man**. 2000AD had John Probe, M.A.C.H. 1, as written by originally Pat Mills and drawn by Enio.

The Biotronic Probe

The first issue was a fairly obvious origin, where, like Austin, Probe was surgically given super-strength and speed. The difference being Probe's mind was also given an onboard computer to advise John of strategies and risks. Not that Probe always took its advice, but it was not a controlling piece of tech. Not yet anyway.

M.A.C.H. 1 then proceeded to a series of adventures, where the secret agent took on Cold War threats and high-octane action missions. as directed by his version of Oscar Goldman: Denis



Sharpe. And that's the way it stayed for most of its run, consistently making Probe the *numero uno* from reader feedback.

Despite the popularity, the strip rarely featured on the cover, although prog 6 is a notable exception. However, there was little to it. For much of its early run, M.A.C.H. 1 was pure adrenaline: action-packed, violent, but ultimately shallow. We knew nothing about John Probe's past. And he didn't seem to care.

After a chapter called the Dolphin Tapes, John began to question his own motives as his onboard computer began to take over. He moved to be an assassin, taking lives, rather than saving. Was he one of the good guys? In fact, who on Earth was John Probe? Realising he cold not remember anything before the operation, Probe decided only Sharpe cold answer his questions.

Then began some of M.A.C.H. 1's best stories.

Project Terminated

Breaking into the complex where his background might be found, Probe finds his file – PROJECT TERMINATED! Not only that but his replacement M.A.C.H. 2 stands ready. Unfortunately, it featured a fairly uninspiring cover, despite great art inside.

In battle, Probe is completely outclassed. However, during the fight, he learns that M.A.C.H. 2 is in fact a robot. Eventually, Sharpe calls off the droid as Probe is Sharpe's only success in augmenting a human. Sharpe declares a truce, signifying that they both need each other, even if they do not like each other.

Next up is the Final Encounter – yep, the big hit of the summer was Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Here, Probe rescues a captured alien from governmental forces. In the battle to free the alien (nicknamed Fred), Sharpe is gunned down, meaning Probe loses the chance to find out about his past. In a final heroic act, Probe sacrifices himself for Fred, with his computer detailing his slow death. M.A.C.H. 1 is now officially closed!

But the M.A.C.H. Project wasn't…Stay tuned for M.A.C.H. Zero!

CHRIS SMILLIE

I'M BIOTRONIC!

STICK TO LEG BELOW KNEE

STICK TO ARM ABOVE ELBOW

WRIST COMMUNICATOR (WEAR LIKE A WATCH)

STICK TO ARM BELOW ELBOW

STICK TO FACE BELOW EAR

STICK TO CENTRE OF FOREHEAD

© IPC Magazines Ltd., 1977

STRANGE ADVENTURES

(Weird Heroes)

The Moon Man

But which one? The Golden Age, one appearance only, masked mystery man from Mystic comics #5? Well, no. What about the recent Image comics character? No again. Could it be the dastardly Moon Man from Worlds Finest comics #98? (Lovely stuff from Bill Finger and Dick Sprang), but, sadly, no. With a drum roll, it is this strange looking vigilante.....

This Moon Man is Stephen Thatcher, a detective in Great City police department. Concerned by the injustice in the city, he becomes a vigilante and to hide his identity, covers his head, somewhat ridiculously, beneath an Argus, one way, glass globe which allows him to see but conceals his face. However daft a goldfish bowl on your head might seem, The Moon Man ran for 38 stories in Ten Detective Aces, a pulp published by Ace in the early to late 1930's. He also dresses in a long, black robe. Shades of Robin Hood, The Shadow and other heroes of that ilk in as much as The Moon Man robbed from the bad guys and gave the booty to the poor.

While there are new, professionally produced, pulp style stories of our hero, did he ever make it into the comics? Many are the pulp heroes and super villains who never got a chance in the funny pages, but this rather successful crime fighter did – sort of.

First, let's have a look at him as he was drawn in the pulps. A thrilling moment from the story of "The Masked Scourge" as his fiancé, real identity and perhaps his life, are threatened as the police discover him.

Ten Detective Aces, August 1935

The Masked Scourge

Thrilling "Moon Man" Novel

By FREDERICK C. DAVIS
Author of "The Bleeding Skeleton," "Dial of Doom," etc.

Hard-boiled, leather-jawed Detective Lieutenant Gil McEwen lifted a silk dress out of a washbowl of blood-tinted water. "This belongs to the Moon Man's woman!" he grated. Little did he know that six feet away, behind a secret panel, stood his own daughter. Sue McEwen was stricken with terror lest that silken frock, bought for her honeymoon, would be the net that drew to the electric chair the one she was to marry, Detective Sergeant Steve Thatcher—the Moon Man.

All the original Moon Man pulp stories were written by Frederick C. Davis. New, pulp style adventures from Airship 27 Productions have appeared in recent years as The Moon Man returns to action.

Several volumes are available from Altus Press which reprint the complete run of Moon Man stories, unfortunately, without the original interior illustrations.

And so to the comics, or the lack of them. SURE FIRE COMICS v1 #1 June 1940, from Ace Magazines, featured a new masked mystery man, The Raven, who is considered to be the comic book version of The Moon Man. Despite there being no connection between the look of the characters, The Raven is detective Sergeant

Danny Dartin who adopts the hood with the Raven emblem and cloak (later just the detective's suit and the hood) to deal with bad guys the law can't touch. So, some sort of similarities.

Much, much closer to the pulp is a character who appeared as a newspaper strip in Diario Popular, a newspaper from Sao Paulo. This was 1965 and the strip ran for 24 chapters. The "masked" mystery man takes the name, Homem Lua, which in English is……. Moon Man.

The title/splash of the first Homem Lua adventure drawn by the creator, Gedeone Malagola, who signs his work as "Gedeone". Taken from Raio Negro #1 as reprinted in 2006. Gedeone also created Raio Negro who was usurped as the lead feature by Homem Lua.

On right, the cover of that issue with our Moon Man, Raio Negro and Hydroman. While it may look like a team book, the heroes only appear solo in their own tales.)

However exciting for Brazilian comic book fans this initial appearance was, there was no follow up in the newspaper. Not to worry, as, 2 years later, Homem Lua burst into comic books as a back-up character in #1 of the superhero comic, Raio Negro - Black Bolt. This version of Moon Man from the newspaper and Raio Negro was based on the

idea of The Phantom (a hero close to my heart) as many indigenous tribes, and others believe him to be immortal. For more info:- http://www.guiadosquadrinhos.com/personagem/homem-lua/5362

It's only my opinion but I believe that the original Moon Man from Ten Detective Aces never made it into comic books, but his more recent Brazilian namesake with his Avenger-like plane is a decent masked mystery man.

STEVE MONTGOMERY

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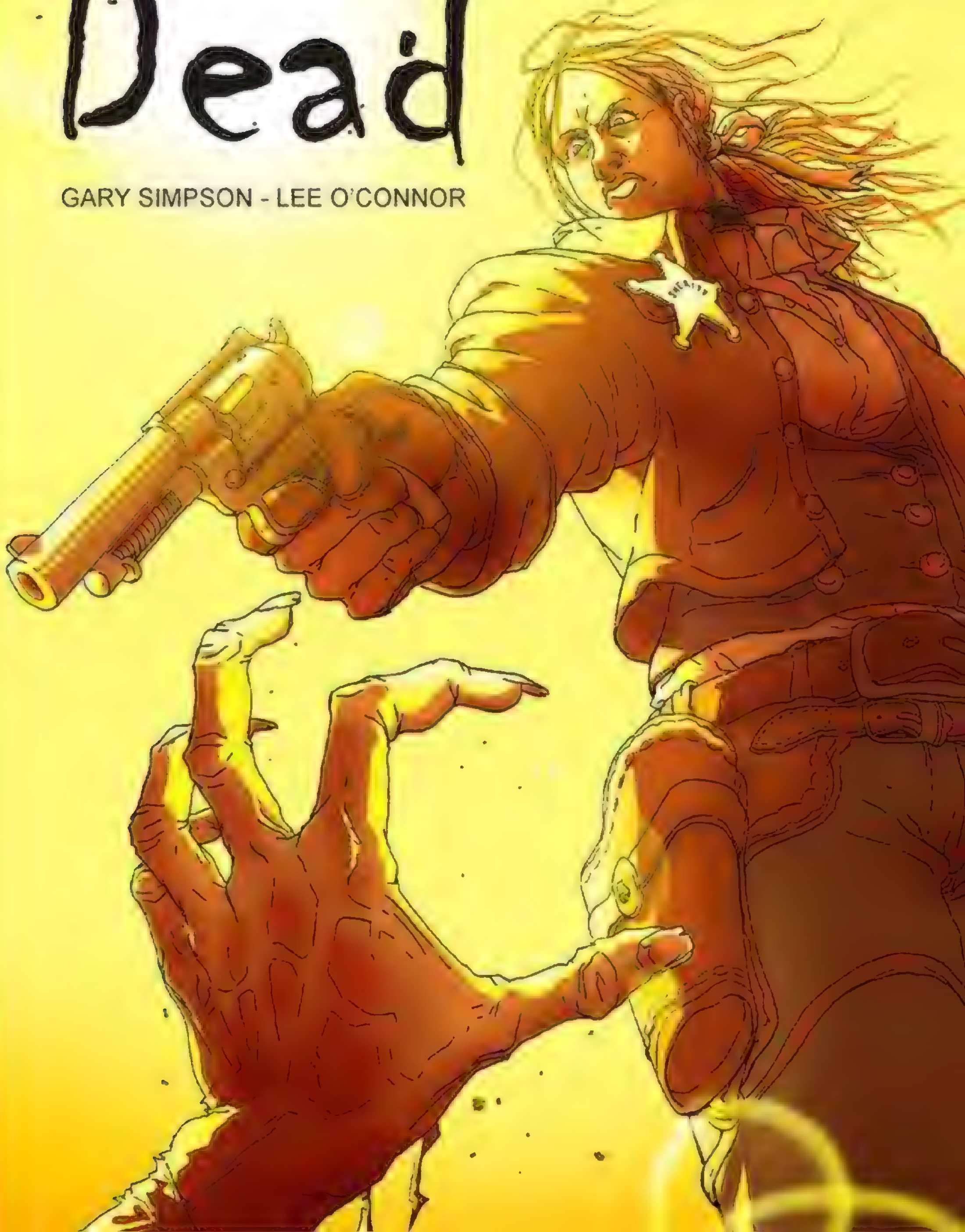
Dead

GARY SIMPSON - LEE O'CONNOR



THE UNKNOWN SOLDIERS

(Neglected characters from yesteryear)

Blackshadow

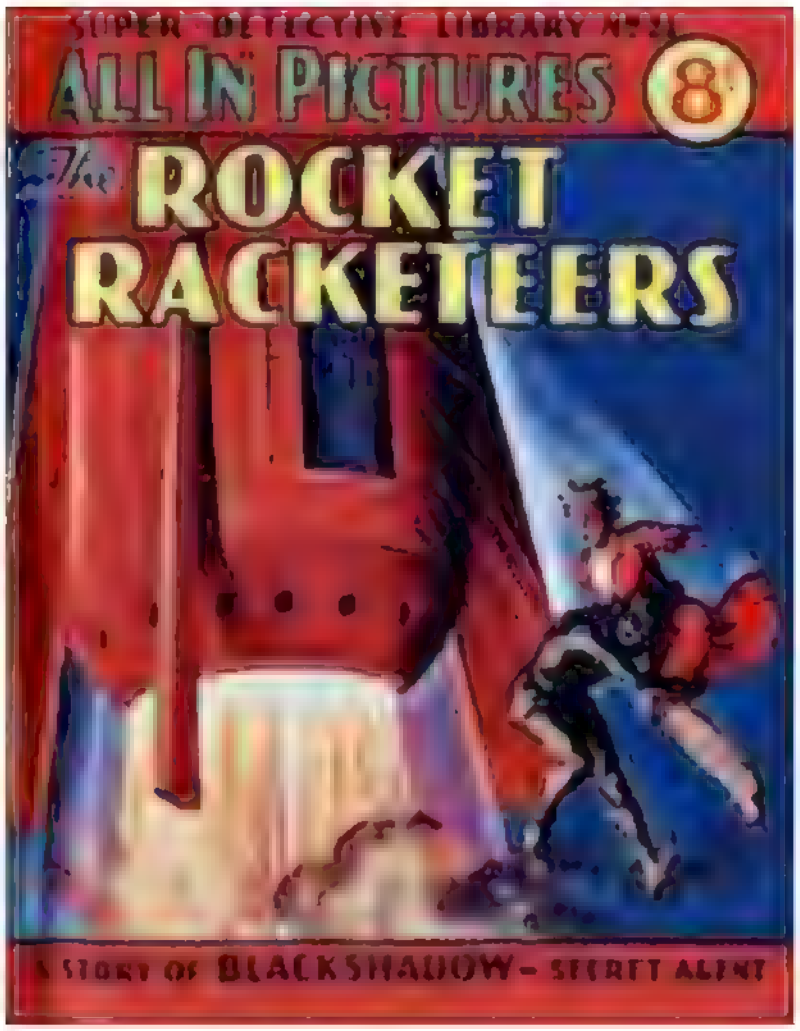
Who is Blackshadow? Where did he appear? What happened to him? All will be revealed as we step back to February 1954. Less than a year after the start of what was to become a run of some of the finest comics to hit your newsagent's counter, number 21 of **Super Detective Library** was published. SDL was a pocket library series published by The Amalgamated Press of London which ran to 188 issues featuring many different characters. Number 21 was entitled The Rocket Racketeers. It featured our masked, mysterious hero, Blackshadow.

Unfortunately for many fans, this was his only time in the spotlight. The 64-page comic featured two stories of the masked, moustachioed mystery man.

THEN INTO THE MOONLIGHT STEPPED THE FIGURE OF THE INTRUDER, AND DOCTOR WERNER GOT HIS FIRST REAL LOOK AT THE DREADED BLACKSHADOW!
BLACKSHADOW!
SO YOU'VE HEARD OF ME! I'M NOT JUST A MYTH, AS SOME OF THE NEWSPAPERS SEEM TO THINK, WERNER. THE GAME'S UP!

The Rocket Racketeers is a tale of traitorous, villainous spies for an unnamed foreign power who attempt to steal the plans of a newly developed rocket. And to add to their villainy, the nasty Werner and his co-conspirator kidnap Miss Fenton, the chief scientist's secretary, tie

her up, place her in the rocket, which they intend to destroy, all with the aim that she should be suspected as the one who stole the plans.



Fortunately for the secretary, the rocket base and the U.K., Blackshadow, who is a secret agent working for the security services and in real life is research engineer Colin Benson, is on hand to save the day.

There are two stories in the comic, not only good masked mystery man action tales but illustrated by two excellent artists, especially the first part. In that one, the art is by Bill Lacey, and his work is quite superb.

The second part is illustrated by Philip Mendoza – different style but a great job.

The stories were reprinted, first in the French pocket library **Aventures De Demain** # 4, 1956, and then in **Valiant Picture Library** # 26, 1964 . The Valiant reprint runs two pages shorter than the other two books, with some panels removed to fit the shorter page count.

Oddly, the Valiant Library reprint changes Colin Benson to Roger Steele, and in the French reprint Blackshadow becomes Ombre Noire, a direct translation. The best scan of the Blackshadow stories is the French one. I have heard that there is a Finnish reprint also.

Right: Philip Mendoza gives us Blackshadow with one of the new gas guns he finds in the traitor's lair.

Below:
Blackshadow drops through the skylight of the traitor's office. From the Philip Mendoza drawn adventure.

In the nick of time, Blackshadow (or in this case Ombre Noire, as this panel is from Aventures de Demain) rescues Jill Fenton from inside the rocket and leaps to safety as the rocket motors start up.

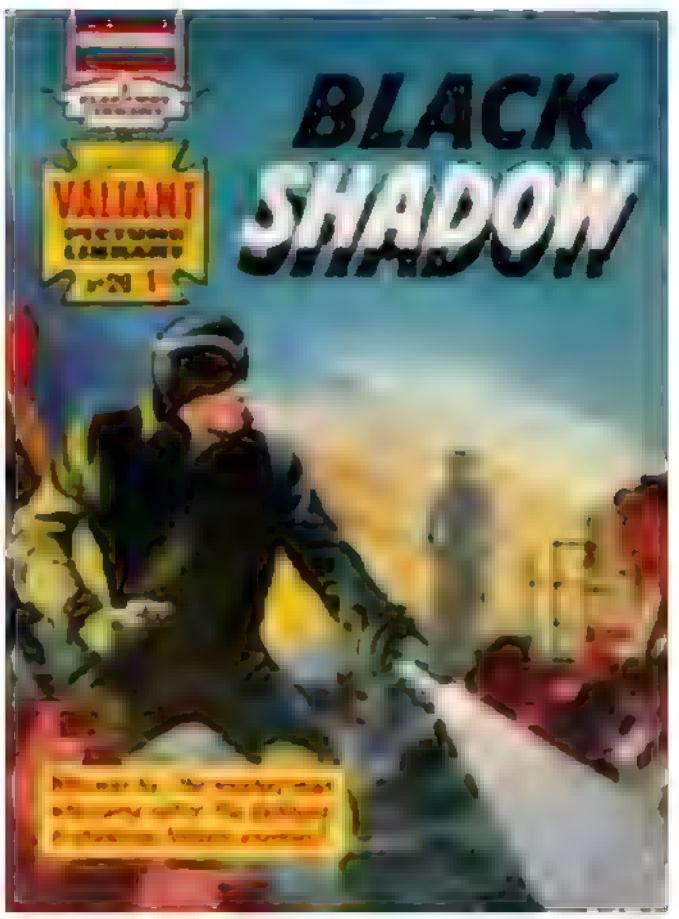
The traitors make a dash for it, bottom middle of the panel.

Below is the cover from Valiant Picture Library #26. A good illustration indeed and one which entices the reader inside to find out just who is *"....the mystery man who came out of the darkness...."*

The problem with the cover is that the scene does not appear in either story, nor is there an indication of who drew the piece.Even GCD has no attribution.

Left: Blackshadow's first appearance as he confronts the spies. Drawn by Bill Lacey

Was it a discarded illustration or perhaps a panel from a proposed second issue?



Is it time for Blackshadow to return to the comic book stage? I think so. Preferably with the same cold war setting. But, considering the sheer quality of the art, particularly that of Bill Lacey, It would need the talents of one of today's better pencil wielders.

Could our hero also be a part of a British superhero/masked mystery person group?

How about **B.O.S.H**. – British Organisation of Superheroes or something equally daft?

Members might include other neglected and forgotten characters, perhaps:

Red Avenger (another one-shot caped crusader);

The Bat with his bat costume which let him fly;

Zark, the Martian Lad with the big artificial wings and ray gun;

and what I'd love to see in the group, **The Silent Shadows**, relocated via a time disturbance to the 1950's to fight for justice as members of B.O.S.H.

STEVE MONTGOMERY

What if the Fantastic Four hadn't stopped Galactus?

For the first time in creation, Galactus was denied! Through the actions of the Watcher, the Human Torch was able to retrieve the Ultimate Nullifier and dissuade the Planet Devourer from destroying Earth. But what if the Watcher had kept to his oath of non-interference? What if the Fantastic Four hadn't stopped Galactus? Guest starring members of the Avengers and Defenders. A re-imagining of FF #48-50.

BRIT RANDOM

(a UK comic reviewed)

Jet 29th May 1971

In this feature, I will select a comic produced in Britain, whether that be from the giants of IPC Fleetway or DC Thomson, Marvel UK in all it's guises, or even some of the smaller independent comics from the Platinum Age onwards.

Just one comic from just one date.

I never read Jet. I was far too young when it came out. It only lasted less than one year – that year being 1971. This one I picked up in a charity shop in Falmouth, Cornwall recently. Although I only paid around one pound for it, the original price was a tiny 3p!

The comic is your typical 1970s newsprint. Designed to be read and discarded, the comic features mostly black-and-white strips, with a colour back page and centre spread, and a selection of features. The banner is very reminiscent of many of the *Fleetway* comics (for this was indeed one), especially **Lion** comic. **Tiger** not too dissimilar, and **Valiant** was basically the same with the red-and-yellow reversed.

Straight-away, there's an eye-catching cover, luring you into the comic, as it displays the 'Heading for a Big Crunch' tease from *Crazy Car Capers*. Looks great!

Zooming in, for the first couple of pages, we have **Von Hoffman's Invasion**. There are no credits anywhere in the comic, but Rebellion has since reprinted this in their Treasury of British Comics, so I can tell you it's from the mind of one of the great stalwarts of boys adventure, Tom Tully. The art is by the very detailed nightmarish pen of Eric Bradbury. Basically, Von Hoffman is able to enlarge insects and proceeds to wage war against England for her role in defeating Germany in World War II. This episode sees Von Hoffman flying atop a gigantic wasp. As it cases a helicopter to crash, a last burst of machine gun from the chopper smashes into the wings of the wasp to send the inventor crashing down. The final page sees Von Hoffman running from some angry (presumably) farmers. In danger of being caught, he spies some frogs, then...to be continued next week. Brilliant fun! Very readable.

Next, we have **Faceache** – the boy who could twist his face into many looks. Faceache ran for many years, in several publications, but I remember him from Buster. A favourite of mine.

The **Sludgemouth Sloggers** is bizarre. A popular TV game show at the time was It's A Knockout, where teams played the most ludicrous games, often in ridiculous over-sized costumes. Here, it is reimagined as 'What-A-Lark' and treated as though it is a money-spinning competitive sport. All the while with a schemer determined to case havoc and make the Sloggers lose. Again, it's a lot of fun, even if very silly.

The Dwarf is another strange one. A very gothic art by Tom Kerr, this strip featured an evil black-clad dwarf, who seemed to get as much out of teasing the police as he did in grand theft. He had this odd feature of living inside people – well, not people but models of them, where he would climb out of their chambered stomach after sending the detective on a wild goose chase. Very odd but very entertaining. This would make a good collection album.

Bala the Briton is a cross between Conan and the Hobbit. Once more, a very entertaining tale as Bala is on a quest (I'm not quite sure why on this one episode), and must cross a land of monsters and giants on his way.

The Sergeant's Four does what it says on the tin. Each on is from a

different country of Great Britain, and all used to being in command. Plenty of military derring-do – the War still loomed large in people's minds – this one was also played for laughs. The sergeants were just as likely to be bashing one another as fighting the Nazis. Not my favourite story but it was still perfectly enjoyable.

Named after a popular song, **Paddy McGinty** is a schoolboy who befriends a shape-shifting alien. When not fighting criminals, the alien turns into a goat to avoid suspicion. Who on Earth came up with this idea? Here, the alien switches between goat and bear to thwart some thieves. However, a lightning strike temporarily freezes the alien into the bear, leaving the villagers to suspect Paddy is in danger.

The Kids from Stalag 41 is the colour feature. Unfortunately, I think there are other strips that deserved to be seen as the standout. The premise is of children being kept in a prisoner-of-war (see, I told you readers were war-obsessed) camp by the Germans. Played for laughs, it's neither funny nor exciting.

With England being put out in the qualifying rounds for the World Cup, for some reason, a tiny island of **New Anglia** is entered into the stages as England's new hope. Quite how, I've no idea. Being Scottish, I also wasn't especially gunning for them. Maybe you have to see a few episodes but this wasn't up to the thrills'n'chills of most football stories.

Talking of football, there's a one-page advert for **Action Man Footballer**. Despite having a good few Action Man dolls and toys, I've never heard of him. Then again, you only had a choice of seven English clubs to choose from, so if you are not a fan of the like of Manchester United or Leeds, it will have limited appeal.

Cover stars (and that would change every week) was **Crazy Car Capers**. The gothic art was by Francisco Solano Lopez, most famous in Britain for Janus Stark. I presume the Wacky Races cartoon was popular then, as this combines that toon with the film, 'It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World', where competitors face off against multiple weird looking cars in a round-Britain race for £100,000. Total unbridled imagination.

Next up, we have our one and only text story: **It's A Weird World**. It does sound like the title of a comedy. However, this episode, at least, concerns itself with a near miraculous escape from a Lancaster bomber hit by, you guessed it, German guns. Resigned to his death, flight-lieutenant George Brophy, is stuck fast in his blazing cockpit as the

Regardless of personal danger, Mynarski snatched up a fire axe and began battering at the turret, in which his friend was trapped.

aeroplane prepares to hit the deck. As it crashes, his turret is ripped off, leaving Brophy with only minor injuries. All that is, except for the valiant Andrew Mynarski, who fought to open the turret, despite him being free to leave from his rear gunner position. Dying of the burns he received in doing this, Mynarksi received the posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions.

The text is followed by **Jest A Minute** – a selection of jokes written by readers (that said I'm not convinced they were). There's not a single one I'll be saving for my after-dinner speeches (if I were ever invited to give one!).

Athletics was much more popular in the Seventies than now, with local events gaining mainstream coverage. In keeping with the trend, comics had several athletic stars. Virtually all of them, slightly weird in some way. None of them could just get there by simple training. **Kester Kidd** was no exception. Growing up in the countryside, Kester somehow was stronger and faster than all around him, so was giving special training to make him a star. However, there were some nefarious no-gooders determined to hinder him. This strip sees him subjected to a magno-mat that stops him from moving. Are feet magnetic? It was alright but not the best story in the comic from a long way.

Mike Western, most famous for his *Leopard from Lime Street*, illustrates **Patridge's Patch**, where Tom Partridge and his dog, Feller, move from policing the countryside to inner-city London. The basic idea is that Tom uses his country knowledge to catch criminals, with the police ridiculing his dog as a companion. I don't get it. Surely, police dogs were around in the Sixties and onward?

The penultimate tale sees **Carno's Cadets** – a multicultural collection of school cadets facing off against invading aliens using World War I weapons. I'm not sure if this is always the premise based on this one snapshot. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it and would like to see more.

The final story on the back page is again a waste of the colour page. **Bumpkin Bertie** is a thick yokel sowing his cabbages when he's abducted and beaten by fix-hunters, before getting his revenge. Sounds like a horror, but it is in fact a comedy. Not that there's much humour. I'd be glad to leave this in 1971.

Overall, this was a terrific comic. Very enjoyable. It does show the depth of talent at this time when comics like Jet (and Thunder before it) could only survive for 22 issues. How many collectors of Lion are there out there? Not as many as it deserves as these boys adventures had some amazing stories, with art that was good but also slightly horrifying.

CHRIS SMILLIE

INVISIBLE WOMEN

(now forgotten heroines of comics)

Catgirl

Julie Carroll, young lady about town, is secretly Catgirl!

Her costume was, for that time in British comics, very daring, Catgirl appears to have made only 2 appearances. The versions currently available were in Topical Funnies # 32 and 33, published by Gerald G Swan. However, there is an anomaly in the dates. Experts date the stories to 1944.The ones at comicbookplus.com are indeed from Topical Funnies but in those issues there are ads for the Funnies Album of 1948.

So, originally, the strips must have been in Thrill Comics, as suggested by researchers, and the Topical Funnies stories are reprints.

The stories and art were the work of prolific comic book illustrator, Dennis M (Malcolm) Reader who was also responsible for other superheroes.

'LL LEAVE IF YOU WISH... BUT BE CAREFUL... BRUNO HAS SHOWN MORE THAN CUNNING IN HIS PAST ESCAPADES!
UT, CERTAIN. THAT PLUM WILL STRIKE, CATGIRL SWINGS OUT OF THE WIN DOW, SOMERSAULTS IN MID-AIR...
...NEVER...

Right. Catgirl literally swings into action.

Below, first page intro of the second Catgirl tale.

CATGIRL
EVERYTHING IS READY, GENTLEMEN TELEPHONE WIRES WILL BE CUT. YOU THEN CAPTURE THE POWER STATION—AND HOLD THIS CITY TO RANSOM FOR ONE MILLION POUNDS!
YOU WILL FORGET YOUR PAST FAILURES—YOU NOW WORK FOR THE BLACK EMPRESS! TO-NIGHT WE STRIKE.... SUCCESS IS ASSURED!
TEN PM A SECRET STONE DOOR SLOWLY OPENS.
AND THE ARMED MINIONS OF THE BLACK EMPRESS STEP INTO THE TUNNELS OF THE CITY'S SEWERAGE SYSTEM..!
A MANHOLE COVER IS LIFTED. GRIMLY THEY EMERGE AND HEAD SILENTLY ACROSS THE SNOW-BLANKETED STREETS FOR THE POWER STATION!
ONE HOUR LATER..JULIE CARROLL ..IN REALITY CATGIRL WALKS SLOWLY HOMEWARD.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE THE STREET LIGHTS ONCE MORE. AFTER FOUR YEARS OF...!
BY
DENNIS M. READER

Catgirl doesn't seem to have any super powers, nor does she wear a mask but she fights crime in an excellent costume, carries a whip and has a Catmobile.

Bring Catgirl back?

Yes please.

STEVE MONTGOMERY

SINISTER TALES

(sad stories of evil and heroes)

M.A.C.H. Zero

You may remember in the article on *M.A.C.H. One* that Probe was saved by Sharpe as he was the only successful subject. But he certainly was not the only subject. For there was **M.A.C.H. Zero**!

In a story told by Steve McManus and illustrated by Ramon Sola, M.A.C.H. Zero was given massive strength but at the cost of his mind (that said, we also see snaps of M.A.C.H. W and Y, who presumably lost their lives, as well as their minds). Sharpe explains that they learned from this and subsequently put in a computer - so it's not just info that is being inserted into Probe, but a regulator for his sanity. We also see a brief glimpse of a son, being concerned for Zero as merely stroking his cat has caused its death. Despite being strung up and fed a diet of the Crumpets (suspiciously similar to the Muppets), a glimpse of Sharpe causes enough rage for Zero to break free, with only two overriding thoughts on his mind: Kill Sharpe and save Tommy, his son.

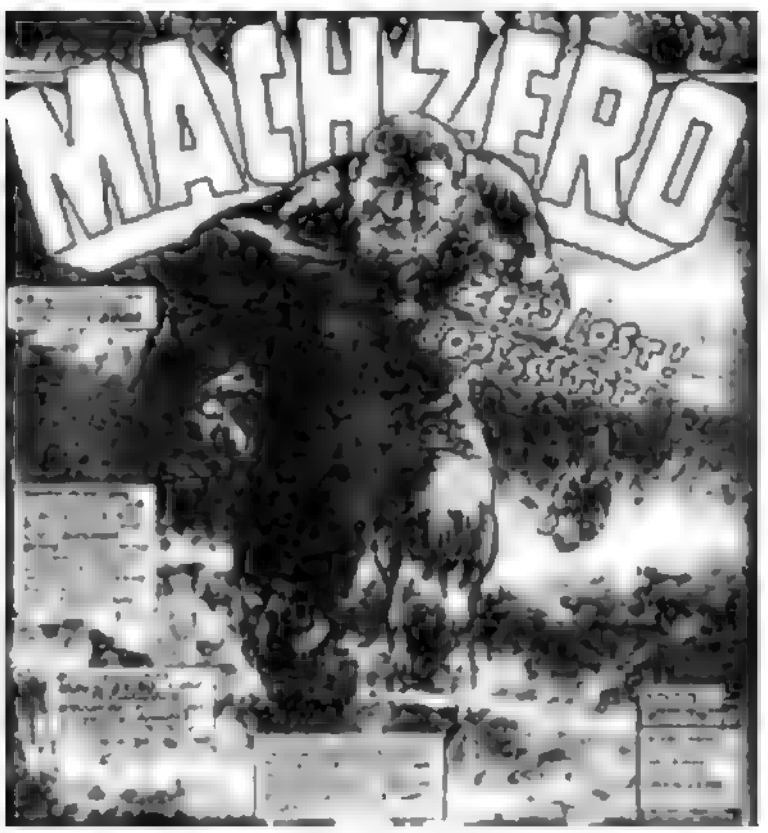
Zero comes across Tommy and saves him from bullies. Well, he thought it was Tommy, but it turns out to be someone completely unrelated. In a throwback to Frankenstein and the Hulk, his appearance makes the adults fear a threat, no matter Zero's helpful intentions and child-like brain. Sharpe makes the decision to kill Zero. Meanwhile, after learning of Zero, Probe makes the decision to save him.

After persuading Zero to trust him, Probe calms him down and Zero willingly enters an ambulance to get help. Calamity strikes as the

ambulance flies off the road and Zero apparently dies in a fireball. A taped message then informs Probe that it was no accident, and he had Zero killed for security reasons.

Zero Is Back!

With a terrific rage-filled cover (in his limited time, M.A.C.H. Zero was the cover star more often than M.A.C.H. One), we see Zero has survived his watery plunge. Emerging from the depths, he notices a circus by Evel Knievel-lookalike *Cousin George*, and vaguely remembers Tommy was at a circus. That's where he must still be! Cousin George, in his latest death-defying feat, plunges to his apparent death in a metal tank. Although this was meant to be his escape act, Zero instead saves him by pulling it from the water and tearing the metal open. Another heroic act that will be used against Zero. No-one upstages Cousin George!



At this point, Mike Dorey took over the art (in between periods of Sola), and it becomes insanely dark. Like it was painted with a Brillo pad. Looked great though. Surprisingly as there seems to be a variety of names attached as writers. I can only presume there was an overall plotter, but there's no credit for that.

We then have the dual story of Zero becoming friends with a bunch of down-and-outs (where he saves them from a biker gang) and being hunted (a la Kraven-esque) by Cousin George. Although initially caught by CG, the might of Zero easily escapes concrete and chains. However, there's a failsafe - Tommy! CG has located him and threatens harm unless Zero obeys. He's then forced into performing tricks. But the tramps have not forgotten Zero's help!

Enlisting some semi-mystical characters called *the Three*, the Vagrant Army assembles. A collection of those left behind by society marches to aid their friend and bring down Cousin George. Against CG's goons, the Vagrant Army was fighting a losing battle. They had feet but no weapons...save one! And that was M.A.C.H. Zero. In a Samson-like moment, Zero literally brings down the house.

Prog 67

3 JUNE 78

2000 A.D.

9p

EARTH MONEY

IN ORBIT EVERY MONDAY

MACH ZERO in... DARTS OF DEATH!

George escapes into the sewers. Finding a cubby hole, George pushes aside the slab and waits for Zero to pass. However, the slab only opens one way. As the nook fills with water, CG is left to drown. No wiser, Zero exits the sewer, only thinking of how he can find Tommy.

There are a couple of tales I'll gloss over. The **1978 Sci-Fi Special** was basically a punch-up between Zero and a friendly robot. Hulk has done this several times, whilst the Suit is an entertaining story about a weakling turned powerhouse at immense cost. However, I'm hopping along to the final M.A.C.H. Zero story, ominously entitled…

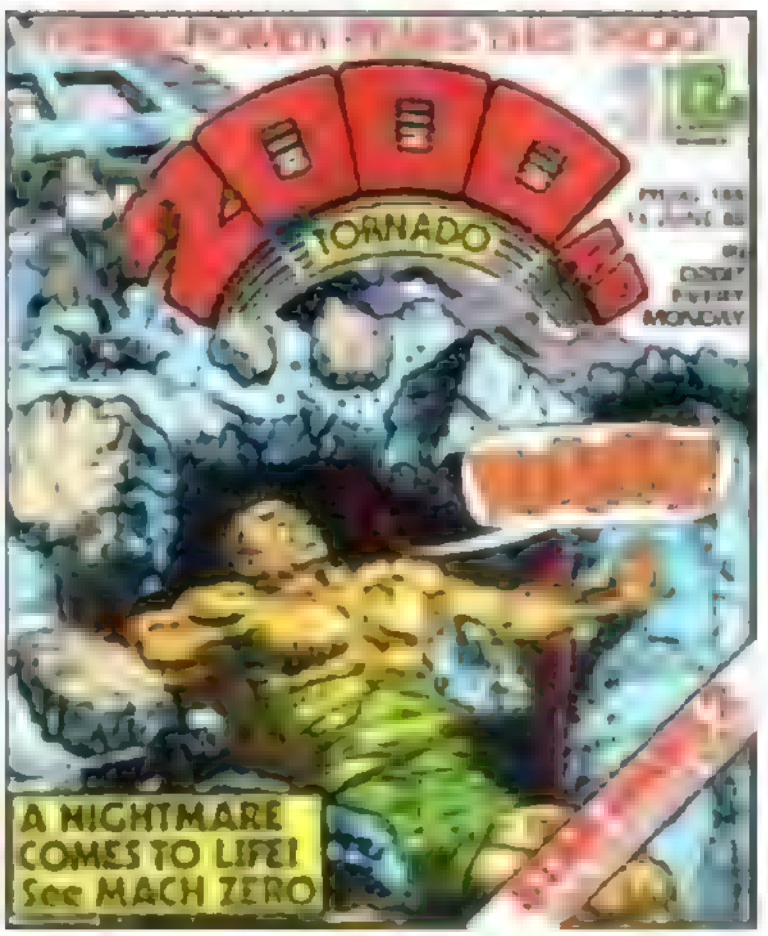
The Final Days

We learn that Zero has been rehabilitated into being a railway porter. He looks quite cute in his uniform. However, we also learn that the hyperpuncture treatment is slowly killing him (a fact Zero is aware of) and that the powers-that-be feel it would be better to brand him a menace and exterminate him – it saves money that way.

Zero never thinks of Tommy anymore. He doesn't think of much. Not in the daytime anyway, but the nightmares still appear. All that changes when a family with an adopted boy pass through Zero's station. Zero instantly recognises his erstwhile son! He decides to follow and find Tommy.

Catching up with what he believes is his son, Zero frees the boy from his living nightmare. The boy is very grateful…but knows he is not Zero's son.

As Zero suffers an agonising hyperpuncture attack, Tommy sees his chance and ditches the deadbeat. In his escape though, he comes across the military trying to catch Zero. He overhears them discussing that the boy must never know Zero is his father.



Tommy runs back to his father. Unfortunately, only in time to see they have caught up with Zero. Tommy, in a twist, then saves Zero by launching an all-out attack. Having had time to recover, the father and son face off against the Army. A stray shot hits

Tommy, sending Zero into a rage. The troops stand no chance. Not the ground troops anyway.

A fighter jet spits fire overhead, much to the childlike fascination of Zero. But in his damaged body, not even Zero can survive that. With his injury not serious, Tommy rushes back to Zero. As his life slips away, his mind begins to return. Zero tells Tommy how glad he was to spend some time with him and not to blame the security forces. In a touching moment, Zero passes.

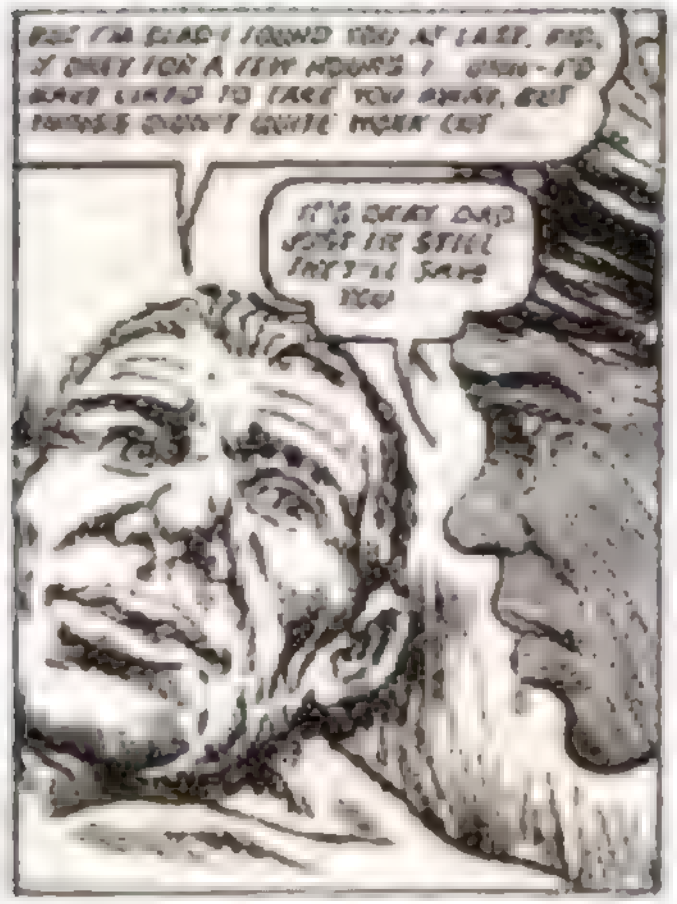
Epilogue

Despite the short encounter, Zero did save Tommy. He was no longer the frightened abused creature but a man of action. He gives his farewell to his abusive adopted family who no longer feel they can control him and off he goes...

"for the first time in his life, he knows who he is
...and where he is going"

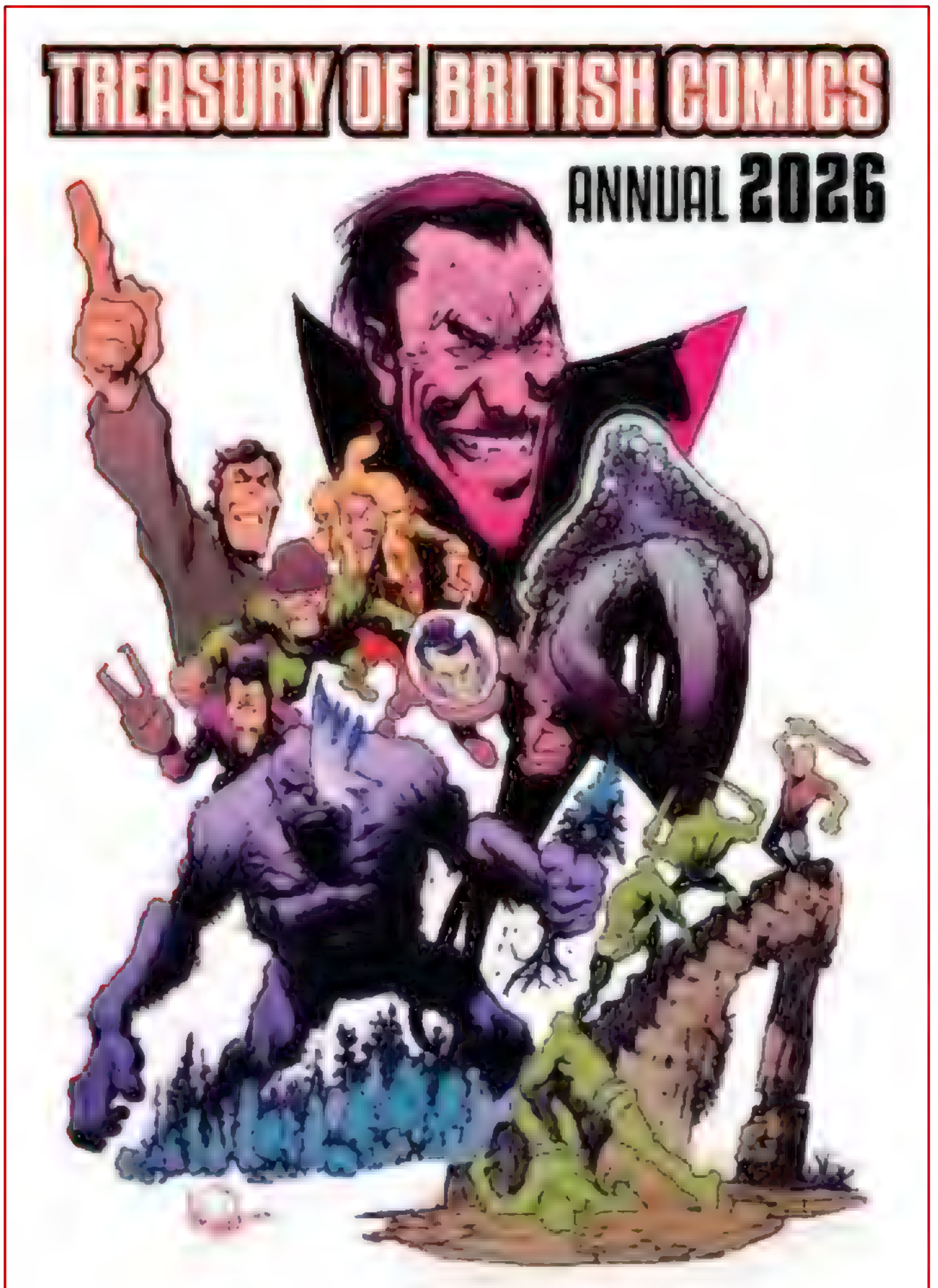
Both M.A.C.H. One and Zero were reprinted in the excellent Eagle monthly toward the end of its run.

Final Thoughts



The M.A.C.H. Project reflected the evolution of **2000AD** in a way most strips took a while to catch up on. Beginning as a simple TV-influenced super-powered secret agent, it quickly tripped through the action man to a more intelligent detective series. Along the way, Probe began questioning orders and his cyborg nature. Eventually, with M.A.C.H. Zero, we see a Hulk / Frankenstein figure become a deeper storyline with pathos and darkness the green behemoth was never allowed to reach. M.A.C.H. Zero stands as one of 2000AD's best – even if that is not so widely known.

CHRIS SMILLIE



Artists

David Roach, Eric Bradbury, Ian Kennedy, Jesus Redondo, Steve White, Vanyo, Ken Reid, Brett Parson, Carlos Cruz & Francisco Solano López David Roach, Scott Goodall, Ned Hartley & Suyi Davies Okungbowa

Cover Artist

Staz Johnson

It's three times the charm as the **Treasury of British comics** returns with a third, action-packed annual!

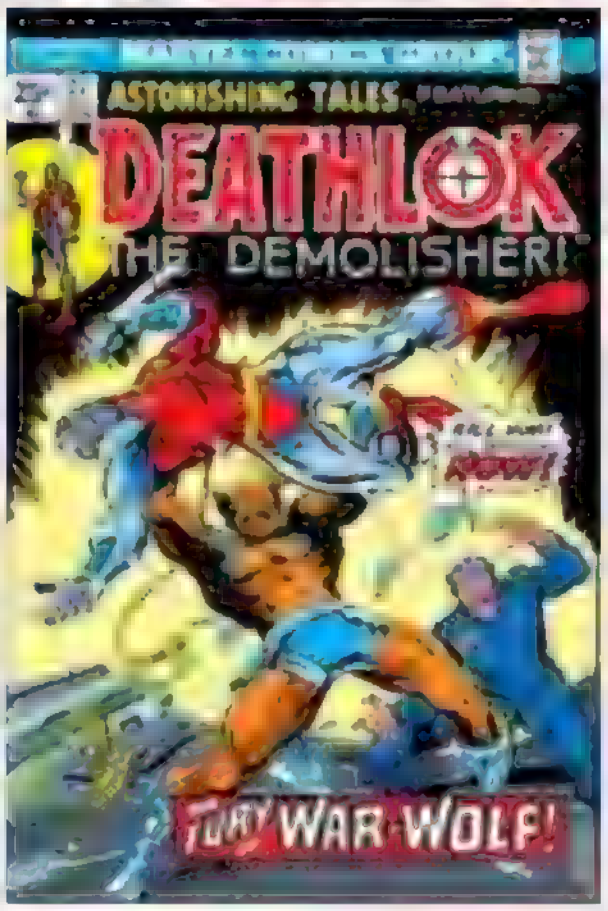
This year we have carefully curated a collection of thrilling, diverse strips from a wide variety of classic British comic titles, including **Jag**, **Smash**, **Wildcat**, **Wham**, **Valiant**, **Misty** and **Whizzer & Chips** amongst others.

There are also four new stories, including *Spellbinder*, *Helmet Head*, *Mytek the Mighty* and *Gums*.

WHERE MONSTERS DWELL

(Marvel horror)

Deathlok: versus War-Wolf



Marvel Comics has long been home to an array of artificial beings — robots, androids and synthezoids. Among them stands the Vision: a being not born but constructed, with artificial skin, synthetic organs and a human soul. If the Vision represents Marvel's tragic poet of the mechanical age, then its most harrowing exploration of man fused with machine must be Deathlok the Demolisher. Unlike the Vision's pristine design and philosophical melancholy, Deathlok is a walking corpse. A cyborg resurrected from the dead, his body mangled by war and rebuilt by military technology into a grim weapon of the future. Both man and machine, neither fully alive nor entirely dead, Deathlok is one of Marvel's most disturbing creations.

Introduced in **Astonishing Tales** in 1974, Deathlok was once Luther Manning - a soldier in a dystopian near-future. Mortally wounded in battle, Manning's remains were repurposed by a military scientist, Simon Ryker, to create the prototype of a programmable super-soldier. Manning's brain was kept alive and wired into an onboard computer system, giving rise to a deeply conflicted identity. A man aware of his past and haunted by his lost humanity. A soul constantly overridden by a cold, tactical operating system. This duality makes Deathlok a singularly tragic antihero. He does not battle for justice so much as survival, struggling with both his programming and his past.

Deathlok's most celebrated adventure arguably came later, amidst the energy-hungry corridors of Project Pegasus. But that story, of cosmic vaults, quantum horrors and unexpected alliances, is for another time. Here, we turn instead to

Astonishing Tales #27 (1974), perhaps the most personal battle of all for Luther Manning. A battle not with ideology, nor corruption, but with himself - or rather, with what he might have become. This issue introduces War-Wolf: a grotesque and savage mockery of Deathlok. Where Manning is calculating and morose, War-Wolf is unrestrained, animalistic rage, fused with technological precision. To Simon Ryker, Deathlok's creator, War-Wolf is "the first successful model." Manning, by contrast, is dismissed as a failed prototype. A regrettable misfire still clinging to outdated human traits like memory, grief and conscience.

Yet, it's that very conscience that drives the tragedy of the issue. Manning - barely clinging to his remaining humanity - finds himself flashing back to his time as a man, as a soldier, and most painfully, as a friend. His search for his old war buddy, Mike Travers, has consumed him. Now, here he is... but changed. War-Wolf is Travers—or at least, his body. Ryker claims Travers died and that only a monster remains. And yet Manning cannot rid himself of his foe. Deathlok cannot pull the trigger. He hesitates, seeing not an enemy but a fellow victim. A reflection of himself.

War-Wolf, of course, displays no such restraint. He lunges, tearing Deathlok from the very life-sustaining tubes that keep his undead body

functioning. As Manning collapses, Ryker gloats over his failure, revealing the final cruelty. Yes, War-Wolf wears Travers' face — but the real man is dead. What remains is a puppet of flesh and machinery. At that moment, the hesitation dies. Deathlok launches into violent action, grappling War-Wolf off the Statue of Liberty in a suicidal act of justice.

However, like so much in Manning's life, it's built on lies. Later, we discover Ryker has deceived him again. Travers still lives - a captive in Ryker's grotesque experiments.

Wounded, soul-sick and numb with grief, Deathlok stumbles away and somehow finds a functioning military helicopter. He programmes a destination, only to find his system leading him home. His actual home. For the first time since his mutilation and rebirth, Manning dares hope for love. For redemption. For recognition. But when Janice, his wife, opens the door, she does not see her husband. She sees a monster. A robot with her dead husband's voice. She begs him not to hurt their child. And so Deathlok walks away in total despair.

JANICE, IT'S ME, LUTHER YOUR HUSBAND!
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT ALL NOW-- HOW I GOT THIS WAY -- BUT...
Y-YOU'RE SOME KIND OF HIDEOUS MONSTER!!
GET AWAY FROM... ME!!

PRESENTLY TRACING AUDIT TRAIL TO LOCATE SOURCE AND NATURE
FINE. MEANTIME I FEEL LIKE A PIECE OF LAUNDRY LEFT OUT IN THE
IF I HAD MEMORY TAPES I COULD TAKE CARE OF THAT CREEPY FEELING I ALWAYS HAVE OF BEING PERSECUTED BY EVERYONE— IF THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FEEL LIKE THE GOD MACHINE EVER SET OUT TO MAKE ME— FORGET IT!

In the comic's most harrowing moment, Luther raises his gun to his own head. Not in rage, but in resignation. Yet, even this small act of control is denied. His computer brain refuses the command. Deathlok can kill…but only others. His programming forbids self-destruction. It's the ultimate cruelty. A killing joke, written in code and steel.

This theme of the battle for autonomy haunts every appearance of Deathlok. Even assassinating then president, Jimmy Carter (who turns out to be Impossible Man). In the grim 90s, Deathlok became somewhat of the zeitgeist. Personally, I always felt he worked best as a guest star…although I'm not sure Ben Grimm would agree. But that, as I said, is a story for another time.

CHRIS SMILLIE

BLACK BARREL COMICS

At the end of 1994, Alex Ronald wrote and drew his first comic, with the intention of getting noticed by 2000AD. One year later, he was a regular artist for the comic, being the artist for mega-hero Judge Dredd.

RED SANDS is an enthralling tale of colonists, tyrants and anti-heroes set in a futuristic 'gold rush'.

STARSCAPE

www.starscapecomic.co.uk

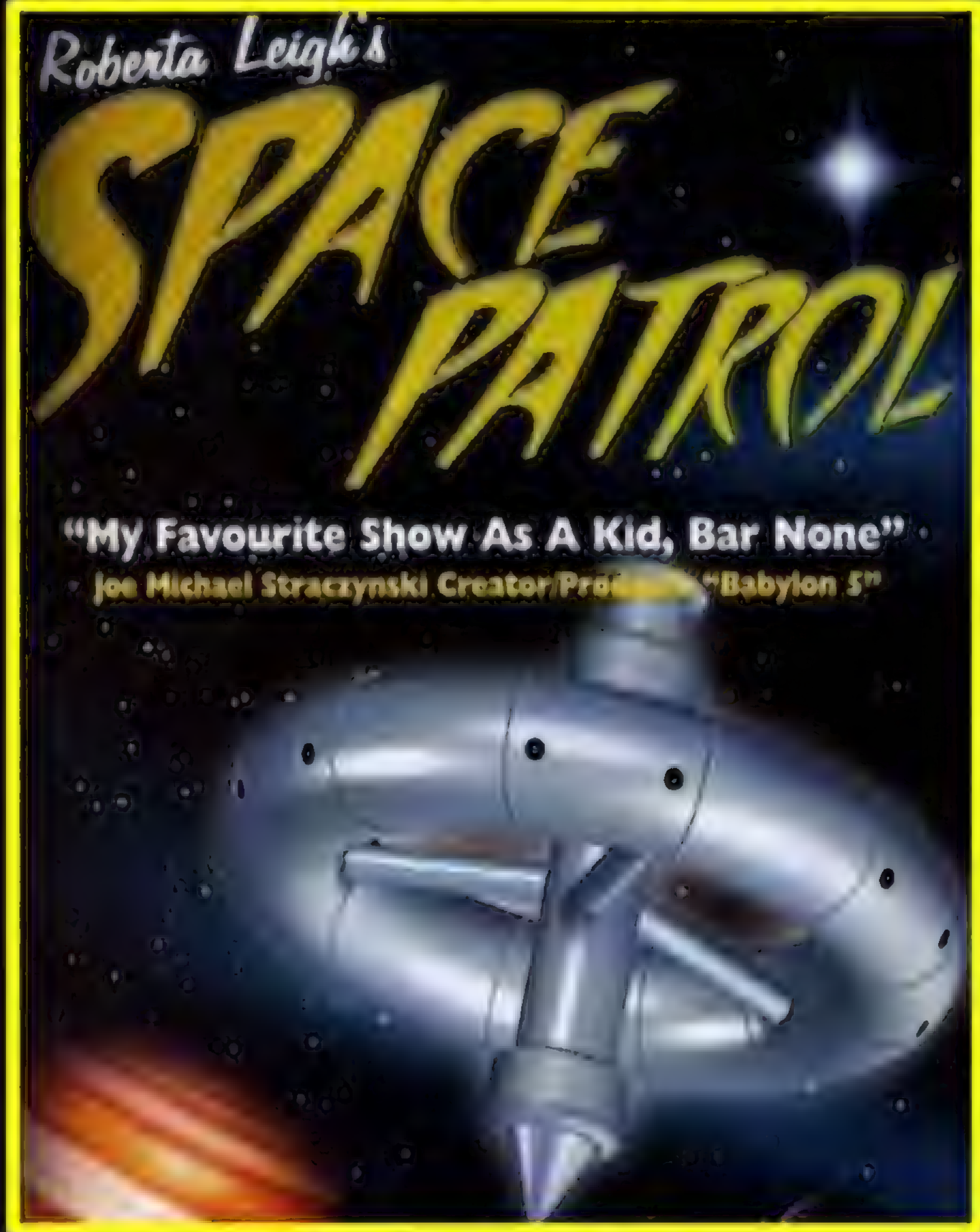
SPACE PATROL

by Roberta Leigh

Galasphere
347
powers up
and heads
for space.

MESON POWER ON
YOBBA RAYS ON

I fondly remember the puppet shows which were on television when I was growing up, going way back to Four Feather Falls and Torchy The Battery Boy. Neither of those were first on the scene, and as our family didn't have a TV, Twizzle was a mystery to me until the internet came along. Later Gerry Anderson creations , Supercar, Stingray, Fireball XL5, Thunderbirds, Captain Scarlet and so on were entertaining enough but I was growing up and becoming less and less interested in the puppet adventures. Apart from one, that is.....



Before we go any further, I must point out that this Space Patrol is in no way related to the American live action show of the same name. This is the Roberta Leigh marionette classic. The title was changed to Planet Patrol for the American market.
Why am I rambling on about a TV show in this magazine which is mainly devoted to the wonderful world of comics? Simply that, as with other British puppet programmes, Space Patrol made it into comics. Not very well, but it got there.
What's it all about? Despite the emphasis in the comic versions on the adventures of Captain Larry Dart and his crew, the real star of the TV show was, and is, Galasphere 347, their UGO (United Galaxy Organisation) space ship. And what a great vessel. Nothing like your usual rockets, Fireball XI5, or those Thunderbirds vehicles.
This is Galasphere 347.....

About to lift off, the docking corridor being retracted

Lifting off with the power ring circling the craft

The science was a bit more realistic than other shows, and not only puppet based entertainments, for instance the American live action show of the same name. The action stayed in the solar system, apart from one episode involving faster than light travel, and it could take months for the Galasphere to reach far out into the depths of space. The crew often went into suspended animation for the voyage.
OK, they did land on gas giants. A daft idea but exciting for a young viewer.

The Galasphere in interplanetary flight

The Galasphere was much more imaginative than the Gerry Anderson ships.

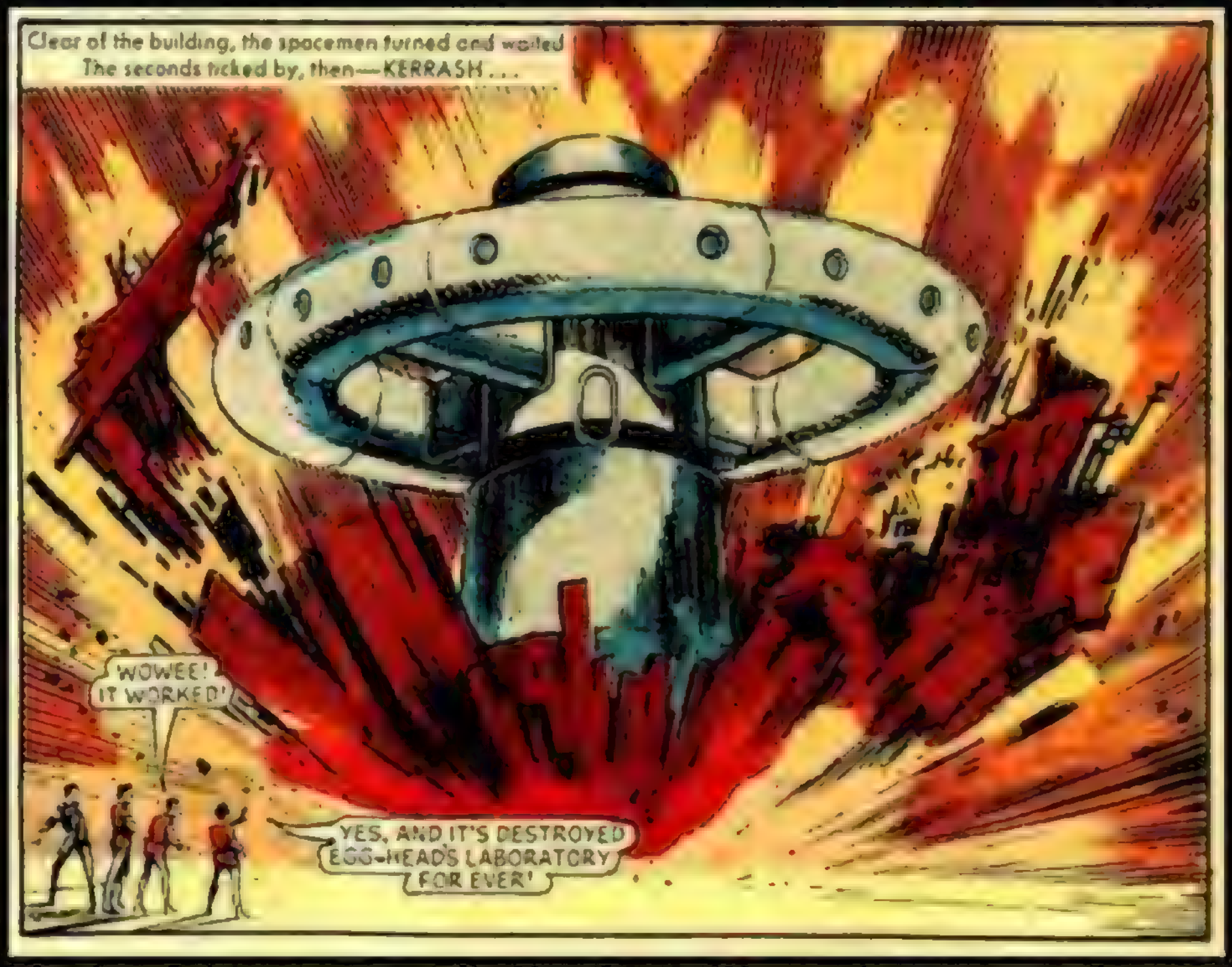
Roberta Leigh had worked with Anderson on two shows prior to Space Patrol - The Adventures of Twizzle and Torchy The Battery Boy - but Space Patrol was all her own, and it became a huge success, both in the UK and internationally. As readers will see from the quote on the cover of the dvd, here reproduced on page 1, J Michael Straczynski says, "*My favourite show as a kid, bar none*"

And so to the comic book version. Stories appeared in TV Comic, illustrated by Bill Mevin, and in Beezer, which featured the work of Terry Patrick.

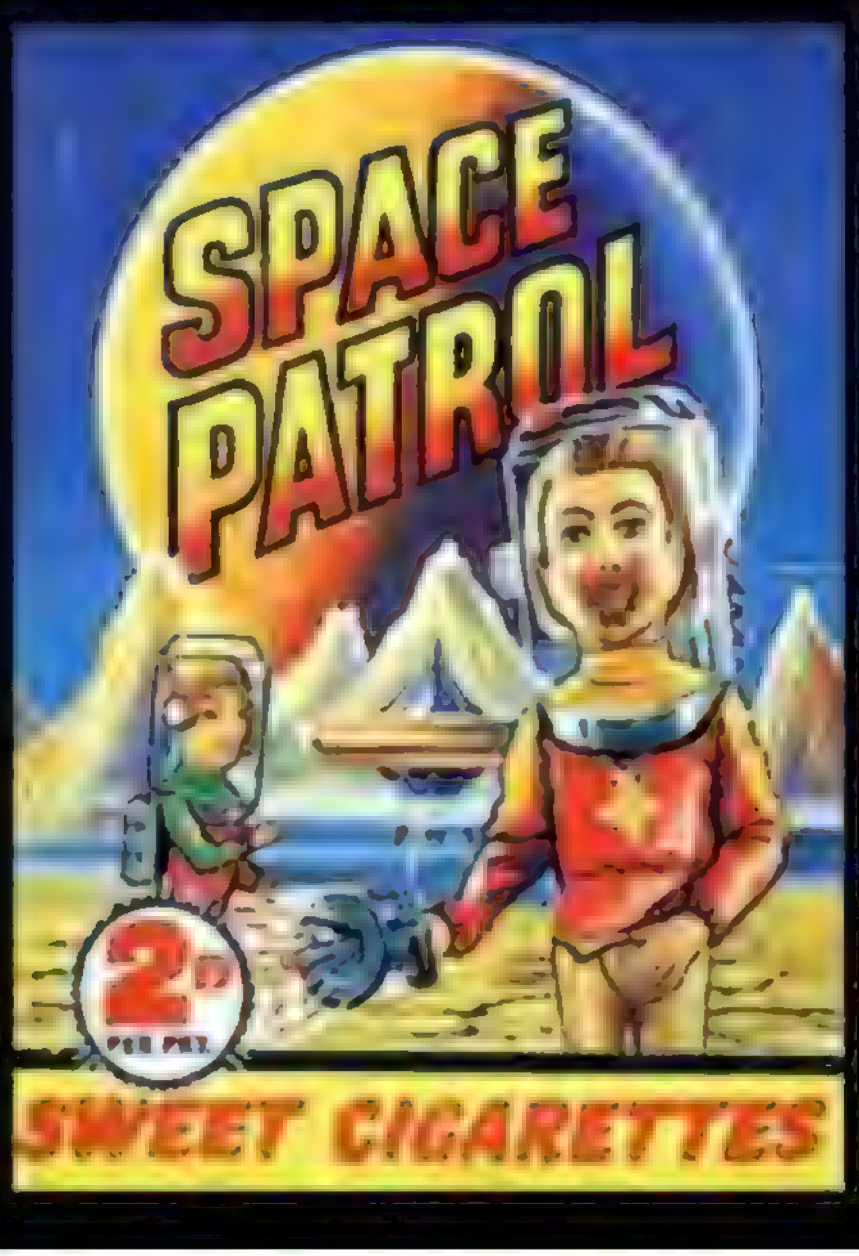
Below, a typical page from the TV Comic Annual.

THEY'RE CLOSING IN FOR THE KILL! WE ARE OUTNUMBERED TEN TO ONE!
CAPTAIN DART LOOK AT THIS!
THEY ARE REWARDING US FOR THE KINDNESS AND MERCY WE SHOWED THEM WHEN WE HAD THE UPPER HAND!
AND WITH THE ENEMY DISPERSED AND DESTROYED, THE SPECTRONS SALUTE AS THOUGH TO SAY...

A Terry Patrick illustration as Galasphere 347 is saved from a dreadful end.

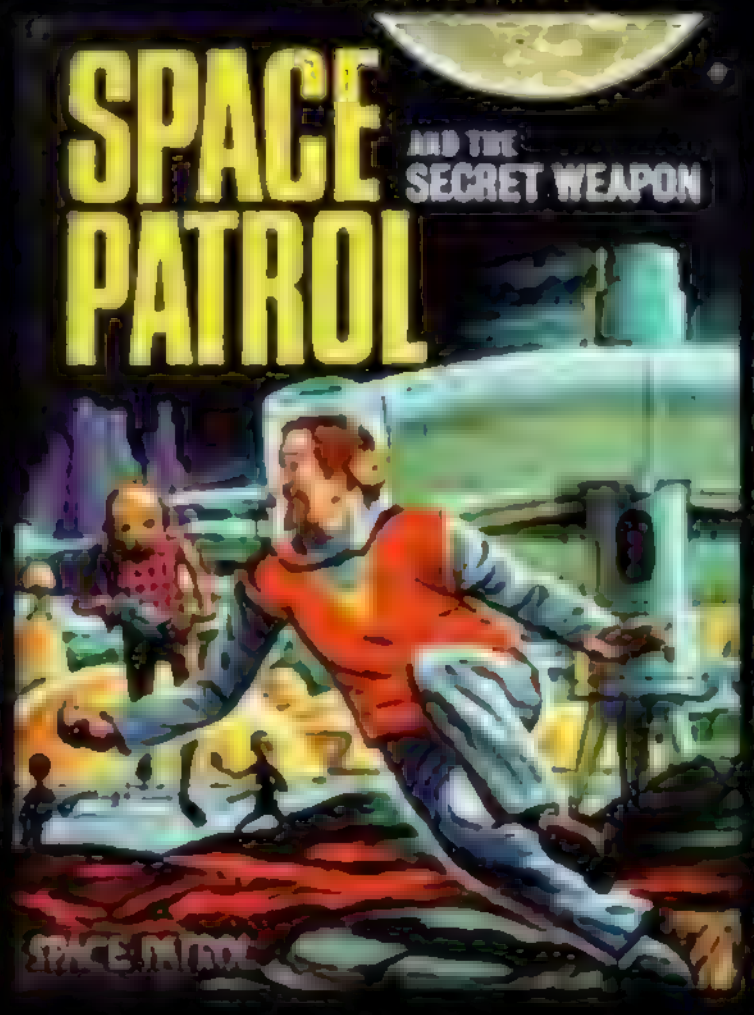

Clear of the building, the spacemen turned and waited
The seconds ticked by, then—KERRASH . . .
'WOWEE! IT WORKED!'
YES, AND IT'S DESTROYED EGG-HEAD'S LABORATORY FOR EVER!

This wonderful wee show generated some spin off merchandise, including.....

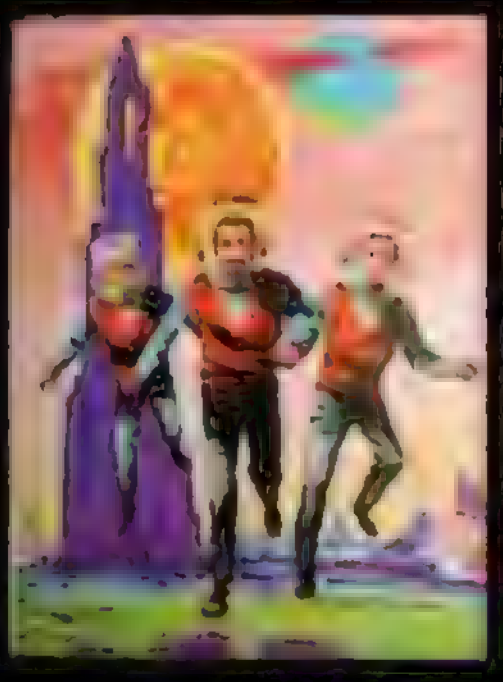


Yes, sweet cigarettes. Not pc nowadays but at one time very popular with children. Right, the back of one of the versions featuring a very respectable looking Galasphere.
The ingredients are oh so healthy. They were made by Primrose Confectionary of Slough in 1965

Space Patrol also had its own annual,
Space Patrol and The Secret Weapon.
This was a hardback book published by World distributors in 1965 and featured text stories of the crew of Galasphere 347 illustrated by R.W. Smethurst.



Front and back covers and the crew from the ifc.



Young World Productions Ltd, a British publisher had a small range of comics which included Gold Token Super Mag. Space Patrol appeared in #12 and # 24. There wasn't a title for #12 but #24 was titled, "The Secret Formula". Both from 1964.
Art by R. Paul Hoye, signed.

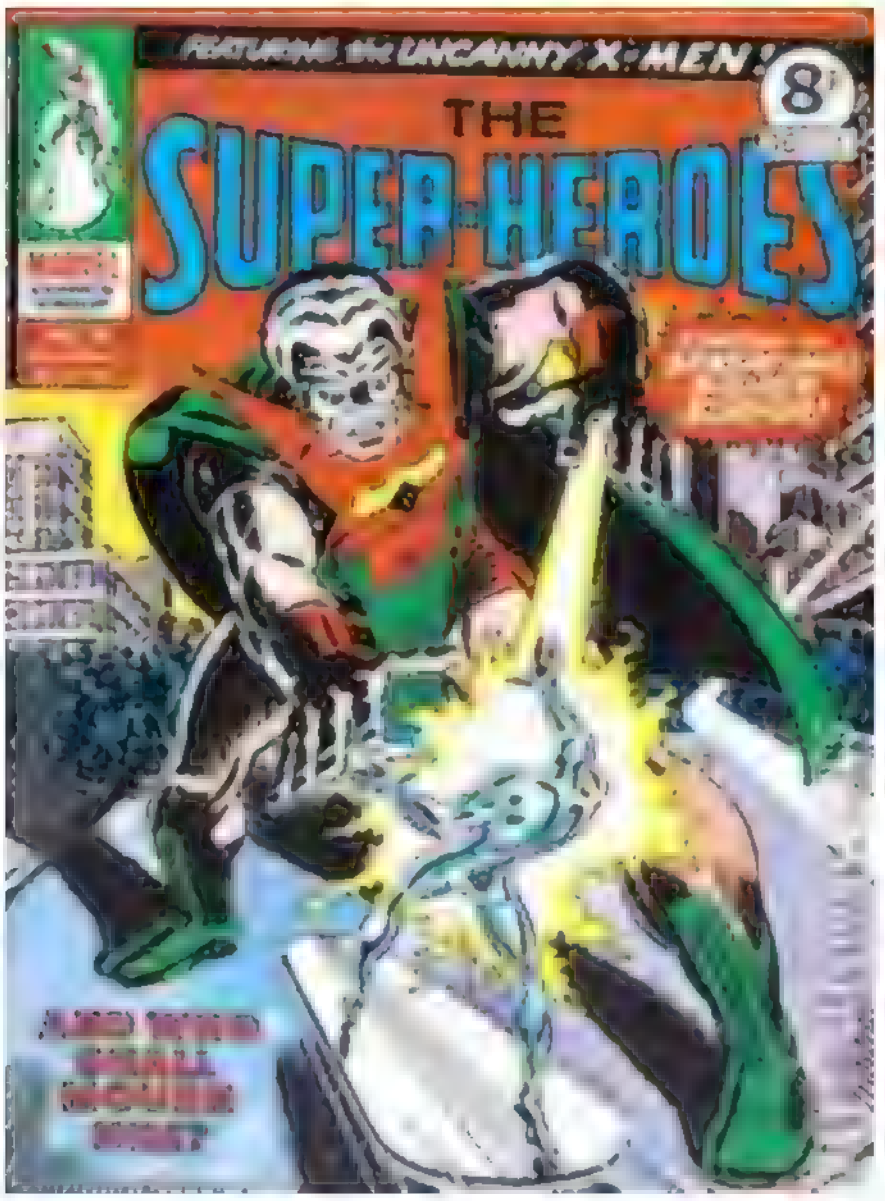
The crew of Galasphere 347 with Colonel Raeburn and other characters

Roberta Leigh with Captain Larry Dart and Colonel Raeburn and Husky on the right

THE GRAVE AND THE OLD

(same title, different volume)

The Super-Heroes 18



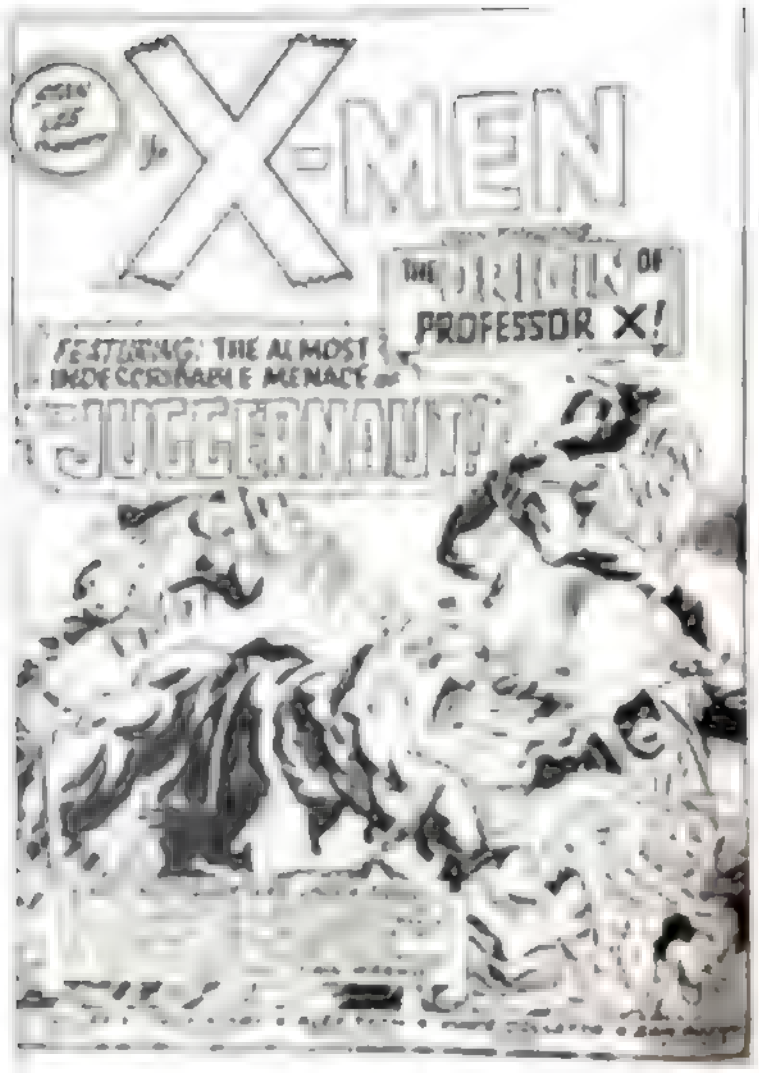
This is a bit of an odd one. In this, I'll be comparing The Super-Heroes weekly from Marvel UK (or British Marvel as it was known at the time) in 1975 with The Super-Heroes Monthly from DC UK (aka London Editions) hailing from 1982. Now the monthly was actually #6 but it was volume 2, so 12 issues in volume 1 plus another 6 for volume 2 equals 18.

Let's begin in the Seventies…

Like most British comics, the Super-Heroes was a tabloid black-and-white comic (what was called Marvel Magazines in the USA). Marvel UK (after a while) distinguished itself from the home-grown weeklies by having a glossy cover.

Marvel UK did not produce any (at this time) original stories. Rather it was an outlet to reprint US issues, as these were difficult to get in Britain, and almost impossible to get regularly. No. 18 features a cover of the Stranger taking on the Silver Surfer, with a strapline 'featuring the Uncanny X-Men!'. And that was the comic: reprints of the Silver Survey and the original X-Men.

The opening page is a bit of hype intended to prepare us for the 100-page special of Roy Thomas and Barry-Windsor-Smith's Conan. Weird. As it basically says 'we'll tell you about it next issue. Bit of a waste of a page then.



The Silver Surfer begins with a new splash page. I'm not certain who the artist was, but it was often Jim Starlin. Each issue of the original Stan Lee / John Buscema strip was split into two, so that four weeklies a month translated to two US monthlies. Occasionally, there would be some changes to the text boxes to reflect the English, rather than the American, pronunciation, and less reds-under-the-bed language. But not in this issue. So, this is the second half of Silver Surfer #5 with the death of Al Harper, as Chrome-Dome tries to save the Earth from the Stranger, despite being hated by its populace.

Britain's comic readers loved the Surfer. Naturally, the stories had to come to an end but not a week went passed without some plea for more stories from him. Indeed, despite there being plenty of time to go, the letters in this issue are concerns about what will replace the Silver Surfer. Patience, the reply comes.

The X-Men tale is from #12 and the first appearance of the Juggernaut. It's a pretty short instalment, with the story finishing when Juggernaut appears.

Aside from the tales, there's also a new pin-up of Marvel Girl. I must admit, I'm not impressed even though I think it may well be by Barry W Smith. The ink is just too messy. Elsewhere, there is a full-page ad for Dracula Lives! and The Avengers weeklies, whilst the inner back page has an ad for Planet of the Apes action figures. The colour back page advertises the Hulk cover patch, where the Green Goliath battles the Inheritor. I was actually sent one of those by Marvel for my drawing of my totally original super-hero, Captain Canada. How I wish I still had it.

The DC version of the Super-Heroes always featured amazing painted covers. And this is no exception. The stories, however, were usually disappointing. Generally, they were very sage and quirky Sixties stories of Batman fighting aliens and the Flash with some silly convoluted story about trying to keep his secret identity. Was this issue any different?

Well, yes and no. There was a short throwaway short story by Gardiner Fox featuring Hourman. Nice art by Dick Gillin and Sid Greene, but really a nothing story.

The vast majority though was the fantastic Paul Levitz / Joe Staton / Bob Layton 'the Untold Origin of the Justice Society' from DC Special 29. Given that the comic usually features Silver and Golden Age stories, getting something from the Bronze Age was manna from heaven. If you have not already, give this a read and the other JSA / All-Star Comics and All-Star Squadron comics of the Seventies and Eighties a go. Terrific stuff.

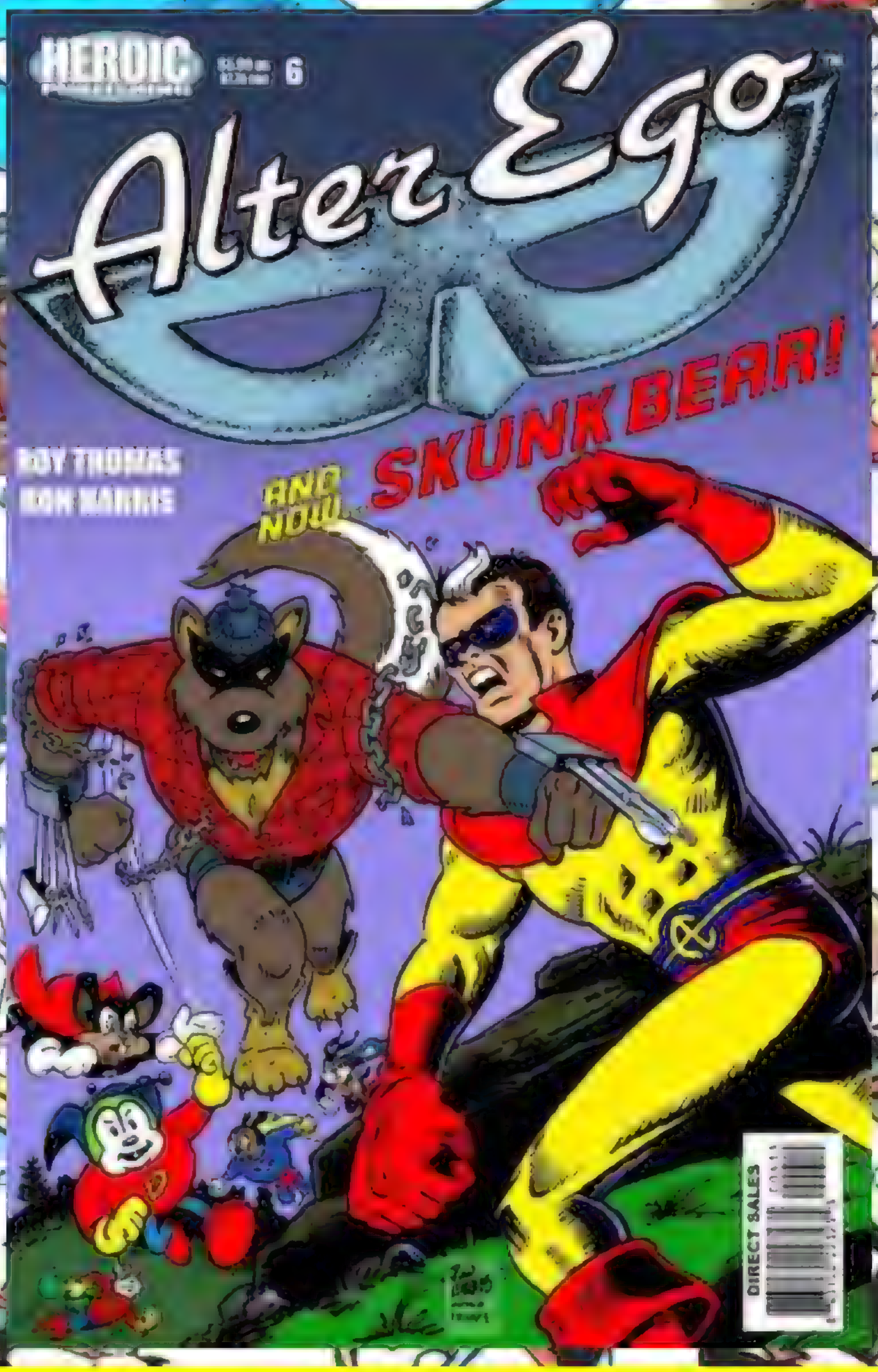
Elsewhere, there is a letters page with replies on a separate page, rather than underneath. Strange decision and not one that improved the community feel DC so often lacked. Not only were the replies after the letters page, but it was also after a feature on the JSA! The article was very much appreciated but why this bizarre layout? Towards the back were a couple of adverts, including for the next issue. Back to the Silver Age then.

Verdict: In pretty much every issue, it would be Marvel UK, but with the Stranger being an okay tale and the X-Men too short, the awesome JSA origin means DC UK take it in a photo finish!

CHRIS SMILLIE

ROY THOMAS and RON HARRIS present a new issue of ALTER EGO!

The brand-new sixth issue of the classic ALTER EGO comic book takes young Rob Lindsay into the world of FUNNY ANIMAL superheroes



https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/heroicpublishing/roy-thomas-and-ron-harris-present-a-new-issue-of-alter-ego

THIS DAY IN COMICS
March 1966

It's all about the Fantastic Four #48 – the coming of…Galactus!

ACG
Adventures into the Unknown #163
Forbidden Worlds #134
Herbie #16
Unknown Worlds #46

ARCHIE
Archie #162
Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica #123
Archie's Joke Book Magazine #98
Fly Man #36
Jughead #130
Laugh #180
Mighty Crusaders #3
Pep #191

CHARLTON
Army War Heroes #13
Black Fury #57
Career Girl Romances #33
Cheyenne Kid #55
Fightin' Marines #68
Gunmaster #88
Just Married #46
Sarge Steel #8
Teenage Hotrodders #17
Thunderbolt (formerly Son of Vulcan) #51

DC
Action Comics #334
Action Comics #335
Adventure Comics #342
Adventures of Jerry Lewis #93
All-American Men of War #114
Aquaman #26
Batman #179
Batman (#1) [Prell Shampoo Premium]
Blackhawk #218
Capt. Storm #12
Challengers of the Unknown #48
Detective Comics #349
Doom Patrol #102
Flash #159
Girls' Romances #115
Green Lantern #43
House of Mystery #157
House of Secrets #77
Justice League of America #43
Metamorpho #5
Mystery in Space #106
Our Army at War #165
Sea Devils #28
Secret Hearts #110
Showcase #61
Strange Adventures #186
Superboy #127
Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #91
Teen Titans #2
Tomahawk #103
World's Finest Comics #156
Young Love #54

DELL
Alvin #14
Beverly Hillbillies #12

Bewitched #4
Charlie Chan #2
Combat #19
Ghost Stories #13
Guerrilla War #14
Kona #17
Mighty Mouse #166
Nukla #2
Raggedy Ann and Andy #4
Santa Claus Conquers the Martians (#1)

EC
Mad #101

EERIE
Monster World #7

FAWCETT
Dennis the Menace #83

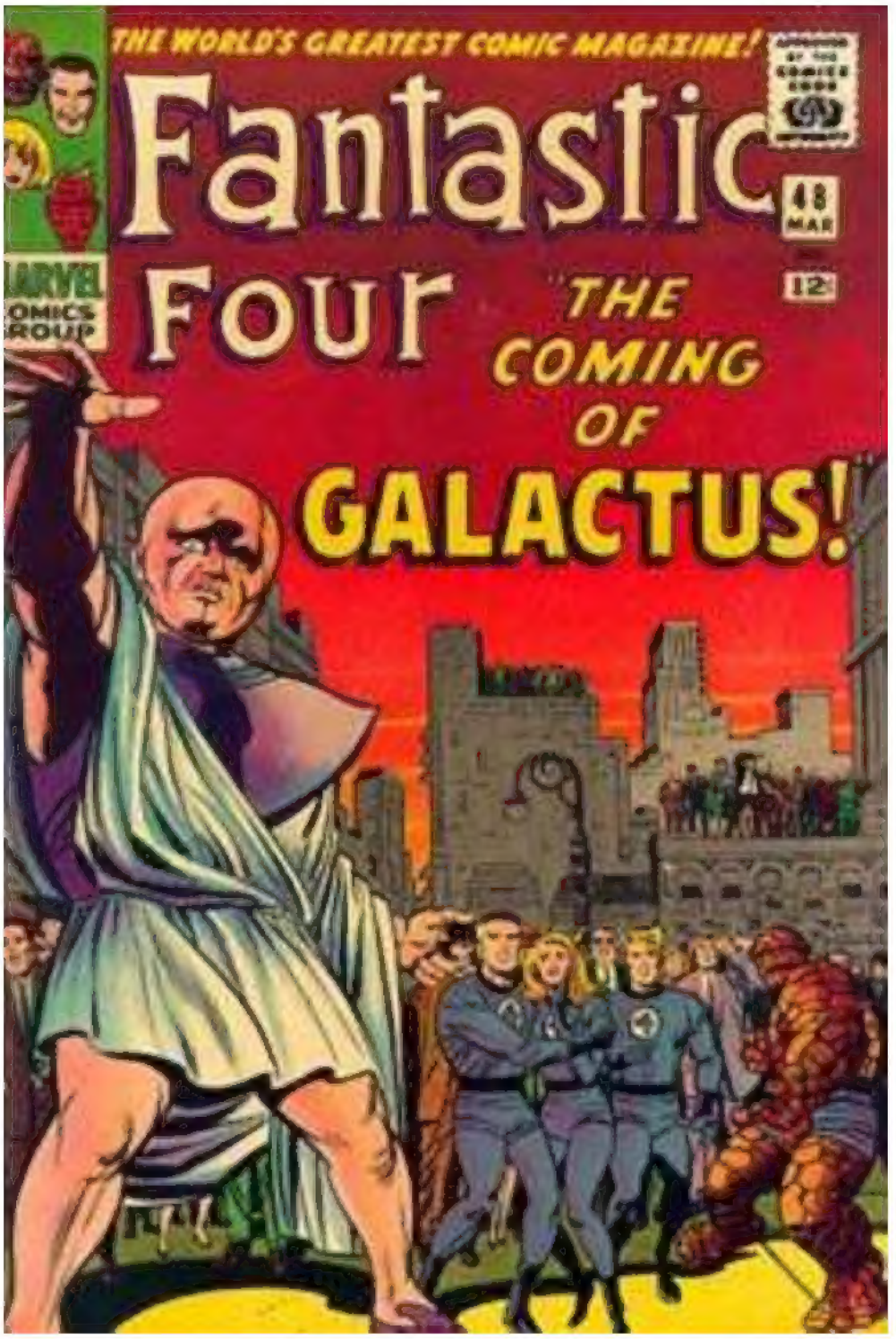
GOLD KEY
Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery #13
Boys' and Girls' March of Comics #285
Boys' and Girls' March of Comics #286
Bugs Bunny #104
Cave Kids #12
Daffy Duck #44
Edgar Rice Burroughs' Korak, Son of Tarzan #12
Jetsons #20
Lone Ranger #3
Man from U.N.C.L.E. #5
Marge's Little Lulu #179
Mighty Samson #5
Porky Pig #5
Three Stooges #27
Turok, Son of Stone #50
Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #306
Walt Disney's Donald Duck #106
Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge #62

HARVEY
Baby Huey and Papa #22
Devil Kids, Starring Hot Stuff #23
Die, Monster, Die (#1)
Friendly Ghost, Casper #91
Harvey Hits #102
Little Audrey and Melvin #23
Little Audrey TV Funtime #15
Little Dot Dotland #23
Little Lotta #64
Richie Rich #43
Richie Rich Millions #16
Sad Sack #175
Sad Sack Laugh Special #28
Sad Sack's Funny Friends #62
Spooky Spooktown #16
TV Casper and Company #11

MARVEL
Amazing Spider-Man #34
Avengers #26
Daredevil #14
Fantastic Four #48
Kid Colt Outlaw #127
Monsters Unlimited #6
Sgt. Fury #28
Strange Tales #142
Tales of Suspense #75
Tales to Astonish #77
Thor #126
Two Gun Kid #80
X-Men #18

TOWER
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #3
Tippy Teen #3

WARREN
Eerie #2



At the time of writing, the latest **Fantastic Four** is another retread of *the Galactus Trilogy*, #48-50. It really was absolutely ground-breaking. We have had plenty of alien invasions and threats to Planet Earth before, but this story had the aura of helplessness. Mind-blowing, and the *Silver Surfer* did indeed make his first appearance on this very month of 1966. Lucky people.

Elsewhere, **Thor** got his very first issue, although it was #126. Basically, newsagents would not take the chance on a #1 (plus ca change), so the numbering followed from the prior *Journey Into Mystery*, from which the Thundergod became the stand-out character.

Staying with Marvel we meet Sharon Carter and Bartoc ze Leaper in **Tales of Suspense**, which carried *Captain America* stories.

DC had a very interesting story in **Adventure Comics** #342, which at the time starred *Superboy & the Legion of Super-Heroes*. Star Boy was courting Dream Girl, much to the chagrin of Kenz Nuhor. In a jealous rage, Nuhor attempts to shoot to kill Star Boy. However, Star Boy manages to shoot and kill the attempted assassin. Not often you get a superhero killing in them days. Even though he's acquitted by the Science Police, Star Boy is still thrown out of the LSH through the detective skills of Braniac 5 and that idiot of Jimmy Olsen with the casting vote (if you want to read it that way).

Action Comics #334 was an all-*Supergirl* issue.

Another unusual take for the time was a crossover in the Doom Patrol and Challengers of the Unknown issues, where they take on the terribly

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named League of Challenger-Haters. In the **Justice League of America**, meanwhile, we eey the birth of the oddball Royal Flush Gang.

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #3 from Tower Comics is my favourite of the series, where two of their most popular heroes, Dynamo and Menthor, battle each other in tale that deserves more space than this little paragraph.

American Comics Group continued their dated superheroes with both Nemesis and Magicman appearing, as well as Herbie as the Fat Fury. Most of Archie's output was indeed Archie and his friends. Their superhero line was reduced to the **Mighty Crusaders**, where the likes of the Black Hood, the Shields and others had become a sub-standard JLA. Only **the Fly** (aka Fly-Man) had his own title.

In British comics, Gerry Anderson's **Thunderbirds** had their own one-shot as a spin off from the wonderful-looking *TV Century 21*.

Lion had the ending of *the Spider* v Dr Mysterioso - the first tale of the Spider written by Superman creator, Jerry Siegel. In **Champion**, The Astounding Adventures of Dr X began, which was actually a doctored reprint of Tintin's Alain Lander. In the same comic, War Eagle – a reprint from The Comet comic – ended.

Jack O'Justice defeated the Hawk in **Valiant** comic, only to be met by the return appearance of arch-enemy Silas Loring.

In **Princess**, Belle and Mamie ended, despite an impressive run, which began in 1952 in Girl, as Belle of the Ballet. In the same comic, the very successful *Mary Perkins* made her first British appearance in the UK, with the title On Stage.

CHRIS SMILLIE

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